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Mr. *WHITE's*
Affize Sermon,

Preach'd at
AYLESBURY in the County of *BUCKS,*
AND AT
CHELMSFORD in the County of *ESSEX.*

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A
SERMON

Preached at the
A S S I Z E S

A T
ATLESBURY in the County of **BUCKS**,
March 5. 1705.

Before the Right Honourable
The Lord Chief Baron WARD.

A N D A T
CHELMSFORD in the County of **ESSEX**,
March 14. 1706.

Before the Right Honourable
The Lord Chief Justice HOLT,
A N D

Mr. Justice T R A C Y.

By *Tho. White*, M. A. Fellow of *Wadham College*,
OXON.

Published at the Desire of the *High-Sheriffs* and
Grand Juries of both Counties.

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SEERMON

A S S I Z E S

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To *Edward Harvey*
Esquire, High
Sheriff of the
County of *Bucks.*

To the Honourable
Dacres Barret,
Esquire, High
Sheriff of the
County of *Essex.*

AND TO

The Gentlemen of the Grand-
Jurys of both Counties.

WHen I had perform'd the
Service you did me the
Honour to call me to, in Preaching
of this Sermon, I am perswaded that
the Preaching the same Discourse in
Two Counties will make it easily Be-
liev'd, I could have no Thoughts of
making it more Publick.

But when You were pleas'd to Ex-
press such a Degree of Satisfaction in
Hearing

The Dedication.

Hearing it, as inclin'd You to lay your
Respective Commands upon me for its
Publication, I could not but look upon
my self under a Necessity of Committing
it to the Press in Compliance with your
Joint Request, least I should seem to
Contradi^d one of the Principal Do-
ctrines advanc'd in it, Of paying
Obedience to the Commands
of our Superiours.

I could not but observe there was
nothing so likely to recommend the
Truths delivered in it, with such Ad-
vantage, or to render Them as Use-
ful, as They are Suitable to the
Necessities of the Present Times we
Live in, as to see them openly Counte-
nanc'd, and Encouraged by Persons of
Your Publick Station and Character.
'Tis upon these Views that I now
Humbly Present the following Sermon
to your Favourable Acceptance, espe-
cially

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The Dedication.

cially since I have by this Means an
Opportunity of acknowledging your
extraordinary Civilities to me, and of
testifying in a Way not altogether
Unserviceable to the Publick, that
I am,

Your most Obedient

Humble Servant,

Tho. White.

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DEUT. 5. 29.

O that there were such an Heart in Them, that they would fear me, and keep all my Commandments always, that it might be well with Them, and with their Children for ever.

THESE Words are that passionate Desire God condescended to express to *Moses*, concerning the National Happiness of the Children of *Israel*; and were designed to suggest to them the Methods by which this Glorious End was to be Accomplished: By which They were to be advanc'd to that Prosperous State he had express'd his Concern for, and Instated in those Publick Blessings, his Distinguishing Providence had intended for them.

And indeed there is such a necessary Connexion between the Obedience required, and the Recompence proposed by God to Reward it, that I hope it will not seem unnatural to apply this Passage of the Law to the State of Christianity, and Endeavour to demon-

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strate from the Words before us, That there is no such Effectual Method to Promote the Prosperity and Welfare of a Nation, as the Practise of Virtue and Religion; nothing so likely to continue the present Blessings any People may Enjoy to future Generations, as to *Fear God and keep all his Commandments always.*

There is something so Great and Noble in the Character of a Patriot, such a Resemblance of the Divine Nature in a Generous Concern for the Good of our Country, that I easily persuade my self, that All those whom I have the Honour to speak before, are under the Influence of this Noble Passion; That they are solicitous for the publick Good of this Nation, and that it may be well not only with Themselves, but with their Children for Ever. I shall therefore confine my Thoughts to the Prescription which God himself has left us to attain this End, by considering the happy Influence of Religion upon Civil Governments, and how Advantageous it is to the Publick Prosperity of a Nation.

I. That the Providence of God should not Overlook even the Meanest and most Inconsiderable Creatures He hath made, seems there-

therefore to have been observed by our Saviour, that he might fully assure us that *Man*, who by the Excellency of his Nature, was raised far above them, is yet the more immediate Object of his Tenderness and Regard.

And certainly if he vouchsafe to take such Care of him consider'd singly, and in his Private Capacity, much more does He Charge his Providence with whole Societies, and Combinations of Men; much more does He Interest himself in Nations and Kingdoms, in which the Lives and Fortunes of such Numbers are Involv'd.

Now if He does exercise such an Especial Providence over Human Affairs, it will be necessary for the Vindication of his Political Justice, as He is the Governour and Lord of the World, To distinguish a Nation by Peculiar Marks of his Favour or Displeasure, to Render them Prosperous or Afflicted, according as Piety and virtue shall Flourish or Decline amongst them.

For indeed *This* Life is the *Only* Season of Distinction and Recompence as to publick Bodies and Communities of Men. And Nations, as such, are only liable to Temporal Punishments and Rewards.

As to particular Persons, the Justice of God's Providence may be manifested either in *This*, or a *Future* State ; And it will be a sufficient Vindication of it, if the Irregularities and Disorders that seem to be overlooked in *This* World, are Revenged upon Transgressors in *Another*.

But as to Societies and Combinations of Men, The Justice of God must proceed by other Measures.

All the Governments of *This* Life will be Dissolved and Terminate with it : They will all at length be swallowed up in the Kingdom of the Lamb, and be made one People under one Lord and Head, Christ Jesus : And therefore the Justice of God's Administration with respect to States and Kingdoms, can only be manifested here below ; the Union by which They are joyn'd together being confined to this World, The Rewards or Punishments which shall be allotted to them, cannot extend beyond it.

Agreably to this Notion, God is every where in Scripture describ'd to be the Sovereign Lord of the World, the Supreme Moderator of all Events, and the Alone Disposer of the Affairs and Fortunes of Nations.

Thou

Thou art the God (says King Hezekiah) even Thou alone of all the Kingdoms of the Earth, 2 Kings 19. 15. And he is represented in the Book of Job, 12. 23. To be the God that Increaseth the Nations and destroys them, That enlargeth the Nations and streightens them again.

And we may rationally suppose that He has Transmitted down to us such a Punctual Account of the History of the Jewish Nation, and of the various Providences he Interchangeably exercised towards them, that we might discover the several Methods of his Dealing with States and Kingdoms, and be fully Instructed in the general Rules of his Raising or Depressing the Nations of the World.

'Tis true indeed, That People were for some time immediately under the Government of God Himself, and therefore it is not to be expected that his Providence should observe the same Measures towards other Nations, or should in all Circumstances be conformable to his Dealings with the Jews, yet since we find He always pursued their Publick Rebellions against him with signal Judgments, and rewarded their Obedience by as Distinguishing Marks of his Favour, since the Reason

son of those Dispensations towards them, as to the Main and Substance of them seem to be perpetual, and carry an Eternal Obligation with them, we are assured, that his Providence will always stand engaged to Exalt or Depress any Nation, according as the Interests of Religion either Improve or Decline amongst Them; and that he will interpose his Power in the Government of the World in such a visible manner, as will fully convince us, that not only the *Strength* and *Establishment* of Kingdoms, but their very *Being* and *Subsistence* are entirely founded upon his Friendship and Protection. But,

II. As the Methods of God's Administration of the Affairs of this World make Religion and Virtue necessary to the Prosperity of a Nation; so have we a farther Confirmation of this Truth, in that excellent System of Life and Manners, which is prescribed in the Gospel for the Government of our Lives.

I cannot hope to speak to all the Particulars of this Argument, since even the *lowest* Degrees of Virtue (if we had time to consider them) would appear in their Proportion to be conducive to the Benefit of Societies, and

and by a *Remote* Influence at least, to be Subservient to the Publick Peace and Happiness ; I shall therefore beg leave to confine my self to the Consideration of those Christian Duties, which seem to be of a more Publick and Extensive Character, and to bear a more particular Relation to the Solemnity of this Day.

In discoursing on which Subject I shall endeavour to illustrate the Influence of Religion upon States and Kingdoms, from these following Principles.

First, Because it lays upon us the Firmest Obligations to Honour and Obey our Civil Governours. And

Secondly, To observe a strict and impartial Justice in our Commerce with one another.

Thirdly, and lastly, Because it engages us by the most prevailing Motives, to all Mutual Offices of Love and Kindness, and Inspires us with all those Good Dispositions that tend to *Unity and Peace*.

First,

First, Religion lays upon us the Firmest Obligations to Honour and Obey our Civil Governours.

As Government and Society were by the general Providence of God Established from the Beginning of the World, as being absolutely necessary for our Common Peace and Safety; so has it always been one great End of Religion, to secure Obedience and Submission to the Commands of those who have presided in them, and to enforce upon all, who have had the Benefit of their Administration, a great respect and reverence to the Persons of their Governours, on account of the publick Character they sustained, and the High Authority by which they acted. And accordingly we may observe, that *Solomon*, when he was reflecting on the Advantages that accru'd to Societies, from the Institution of Human Governments, did not think it improper to recommend Religion and Loyalty to us by one Common Precept, and to assure us, that Our Highest Obligation, next to that of obeying God, is to submit ourselves to those whom he had appointed his Deputies and Vicegerents here upon Earth,
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My Son, fear thou the Lord and the King,
Prov. 24. 21.

Thus again are we admonished by the United Authority of the two great Apostles, *To submit our selves to every Ordinance of Man, for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the King as Supreme, or unto Governours, as unto them that are sent by Him, for the Punishment of Evil Doers, and for the Praise of them that do well: For so is the Will of God,* 1 Pet. 2. 13, 14, 15.

Upon the same Principle does St. Paul press upon us Subjection to the Higher Powers; because *They are ordain'd by God, and appointed his Ministers to us for Good*, therefore *we must needs be subject not only for wrath, that is, out of an apprehension of Punishment, but also for Conscience sake, out of a Sense of Duty, and because God requires it of us.*

But I need not be tedious in reciting the Authorities the inspir'd Writings afford us to this Purpose, being sensible I am recommending a Duty not only beneficial to Societies in general, but in an especial manner easy and delightful to Us, who are happy under Her present Majesties Administration and Government.

It is the Invaluable Blessing of this Kingdom to see all the Qualifications of a Wise, Just,

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and Merciful Governour United in Her Sacred Person, and in every Step of her Conduct she demonstrates her self to be the *Minister of God to us for Good*. Since Her happy Accession to the Throne, she seems to have known no greater Satisfaction than what arises from the good Estate of the Publick, and to have directed her Cares not so much to make her self *Great*, as her Subjects *Happy*, (if yet those Designs can be distinguish'd).

Her being bred up in the Communion of the Establish'd Church, Her firm Adherence to it in times of Danger, together with the shining Example of those Personal Virtues by which She adorns it, give us all the Assurance we could hope for, That all its Sacred Rights and Privileges shall be inviolably secured under her Administration, and that She will transmit to posterity that most Excellent Religion that is Establish'd amongst Us.

And what are all the Successes which have constantly attended the Arms of Her victorious General abroad, and the happy Effects which we may hope for from the late almost *unexampled* Union in the Counsels of the great Assembly of the Nation at Home, but so many Earnests which Providence has given us of our future Happiness? That He will enable

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our Sovereign to protect the Religion and Liberties of Her Subjects against the common Adversary, and by placing a Prince, whose Pretensions she is supporting with her Arms upon his lawful Throne, will so effectually restore the Ballance of Power to *Europe*, as to lay a solid Foundation for the Glory of Her Own Reign, and the common safety of Succeeding Generations.

And now how Pernicious must all such Attempts be, as tend to Disorder the Methods of our Government at Home, whilst Those who are set over Us, are endeavouring to make us Easy and Happy in our selves, and secure against our Enemies Abroad? How unreasonable is it in this great Conjunction, to entertain and propagate any Groundless Suspensions against Those who are set in high Places of Power and Authority over Us? Or by Evil Insinuations against Them, so to derogate from their Reputation and Esteem, as to render them less Capable of Promoting the Publick Good? With what Detestation should we reject such Imaginary Schemes of Government as tend to Unsettle Our Constitution, and Impeach those Principles upon which our *Present Establishment* as well as our *Future Expectations* are Founded?

Certainly such unreasonable Jealousies and Opinions are as contradictory to the Laws of the Gospel, as those of our Country; and whatever other Cause may be design'd to be serv'd, it is to be fear'd that of the *Protestant Religion* is the least intended by Them.

Such Secret Insinuations against the Character of our Superiours are some of the Highest Acts of Disobedience We can Express against them: And (to use the Expressions of the Psalmist) like *the Terror by Night, and the Pestilence that walketh in Darkness*, are as Pernicious to Government, as the open Attempts of its most Avow'd Enemies, as *The Arrow that flieth by Day, and the Destruction that wasteth at Noon-Day*, Psal. 91. 5,6.

And therefore it is one great part of our Religion to Discourage and Restrain all such Licentious Practises, by obliging us to Treat the Characters of Those that are set over us, with Reverence and Esteem; and to abstain from all such Undutiful Censures and Suggestions against Them, as will naturally End in the Diminution of their Persons and Authority, and disable Them for Discharging that Trust which Providence has committed to Them: To receive their Counsels and Determinations, how Different soever they may be

be from our own private Sentiments, with Deference and Respect, and to suppose, that They, like Providence it self (whose Ministers they are) may do many things upon great and wise Reasons, which yet We are not able fully to comprehend.

Thus are the Laws of the Gospel, by strengthening the Authority of Princes, and Enabling them to accomplish the Ends for which they were appointed, conducive to the general Good of Mankind, and have an Immediate Influence upon the Prosperity of a Nation, as they have in the

Second Place, By enforcing upon us the Practice of Justice and Righteousness in our Dealings and Intercourses with one another.

As Religion preserves and keeps up all the Necessary Powers of our Civil Governours; so does it farther contribute to the Order and Harmony of the World, by restraining us from all the Methods of Falshood and Injustice, and every wrongful Invasion, which our Interest might incline us to make on the Possessions of our Fellow Subjects.

By representing God to be the Author of all the Rights with which we are Invested, and the Supreme and Independent Proprietor from

whom all our Just Claims and Properties are originally deriv'd, it assures us that every Publick Act of Injustice, every open Invasion of the Rights of others, is in effect an Injury to God Himself, and a Defiance to the Orders and Disposals of his Providence; it tends as far as in us lies, to turn him out of the Government of the World, and Usurp to our selves his Eternal Right and Dominion.

For what is this but a plain Declaration that we will not be concluded by the Division and Allotments which God has made of the things of this World, nor submit to the Regulations his Vicegerents here on Earth have Establish'd for Determining the Rights of Particular Men?

There is so much of the Kingdom of Darkness in every Act of Injustice, that a Man must have lost all the Distinction between Good and Evil, all Consideration of a Superior Invisible Power, who will call him to an Account for his Actions, before he can allow himself the lowest Degree of it; and every violent Invasion which he makes upon the Life, Fortunes, or Reputation of others, does demonstrate him to have Abandon'd all Sense of Religion, and to be in the Number of those *Who say in their hearts there is no God.*

For,

For, indeed, could the Gospel gain an Universal Conquest over the Minds of Men, or had the Precepts of it the proper Influence its Author intended it should have upon us, we should soon be prevail'd on to maintain a strict Integrity in all our Professions and Intercourses with Men, and not allow our selves in any Course of Action which the Laws of Justice and Equity Disapprove. We should readily think our selves obliged so to deal with every Man, as if we had exchanged Persons with him, and He were plac'd in our Circumstances, and we in His; we should converse in the world with Simplicity and Godly Sincerity, and not go beyond or defraud our Brother in any Matter, 1 Thes. 4. 6. And what a Noble Idea of that Happy State we should live in, might we frame to our selves, if the Love of Righteousness and Justice did Universally prevail amongst us? and what a near approach would This World make to the Happiness of the Other, if all the Inhabitants of it were under the Powerful Impression of Them?

The Blood of the Innocent would no longer cry out for Vengeance upon the Heads of those that shed it, nor the World be any more Disturb'd by the Sons of Violence and

Oppression. Our Trust and Confidence in one another would be founded upon *Infallible Reasons*, and we might rely upon the *Promises* and *Engagements* of Those we convers'd with, as safely as on the *Accomplishment* of them.

We should no more be troubled with the *sorrowful Sighings* of the Prisoners that come before us, nor the fruitless Mournings of those that are appointed to Die. The Punishment and Guilt of Injustice would cease together; and, to continue the Expressions of the Psalmist, There would be no more *Leading into Captivity*, not so much as any *Complaining in our Streets*.

Now tho' it is not to be expected that Religion should ever gain such Authority over the Minds of Men, as to introduce and settle such a happy Change amongst them, yet the Account we have been giving may furnish us with this Observation, with which I shall conclude this Head, That *All the Regularity and Order, All the Tolerable Peace and Security we can hope for here below, are founded upon the great Duties of Righteousness and Justice*, Either as They recommend themselves to our Practice by their own Native Excellency and Goodness, or are Enforc'd upon us by the Power and Authority of the Civil Magistrate.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, The happy Effects of Religion upon Societies, will appear from hence, because it Engages us by the most prevailing Motives, to Universal Love and Kindness, and inspires us with those good Dispositions of Mind that tend to Unity and Peace.

As the Prosperity of Societies is Founded on the Harmony and Agreement of its Members, so do Faction and Discord, every furious and Intemperate Passion within us, naturally tend to the Dissolution of them, according to that Divine Aphorism of our Saviours, *A Kingdom divided against it self, is brought to Desolation*, Luke 11. 17. And therefore does our most Holy Religion, which was intended to save us not *only from the Wrath to come*, but from a great part of the Evils and Miseries of this Life, in the most passionate manner excite us to *follow after the things that make for Peace*, and to do our part, *that there be no Divisions amongst Us, but that we be perfectly join'd together in the same Mind, and in the same Judgment*, 1 Cor. 1. 10. The Design of which general Precepts is, to instruct us what strict Obligations we are under, to live in Unity with Those who are joyn'd in the same Common Society with us; and to subdue that Conten-

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tious

rious and Unpeaceable Spirit, which is so troublesome to the Governments of the World, and the Cause of so many Mischiefs and Disorders in them.

And indeed 'tis with great Reason that the Apostles do press these Duties with more than ordinary Frequency and Earnestness upon us, since their Influence is of such Moment and Importance to the Publick Good.

For were but Men generally acted by the Principles of Mutual Charity, and disposed to receive the kindly Impressions of Unity and Peace, how soon would this Temper Extinguish all those Opprobrious Marks of Difference, which Incendiaries have invented, to the Prejudice of our Church and State? What a happy End would it put to those Inodiating Characters of Distinction, with which they have attempted to divide even the Church it self, by making a Separation amongst Those who have been always United in the same Communion, and *walked together in the House of God as Friends?*

It would not suffer us to Traduce and Blacken Those as Betrayers of the Interest of our Church, who are not ready at all times to Express a Furious, Revengeful, and Exterminating Zeal for it; nor to question the
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Sincerity of their Concern for the Cause of Religion, who make any Scruple of calling down Fire from Heaven against the Enemies of it.

For certainly this is a Spirit, which however it may become a Jewish Sanhedrim, or Romish Inquisition, is altogether Unsuitable to the Temper and Design of the Gospel, which assures us that *The Son of Man is not come to destroy Mens Lives, but to save them.*

They indeed might hope to maintain their Corrupt Opinions by Methods of Severity, and by offering a Sacrifice of Blood, might think to do God good Service : But *We*, whose Happiness it is to be born in the Communion of a Church, whose Doctrines and Publick Offices are founded on the Scriptures, and the Practice of the First and Purest Ages, whose Ceremonies are Useful and Significant, and agreeable to the general Rules of Decency prescrib'd in the Scriptures, *We*, I say, *have not so learned Christ.*

We may Appeal, and Refer the Merits of our Cause to the common Reason of Mankind, and therefore that Universal Charity, which is the Characteristick of our Church, as well as of Christianity it self, will oblige

us to reduce those who are involv'd in any Error by all the Ways of Prudence and Love, by all those Engaging Methods of Mildness, Instruction, and Reproof, as are most likely to bring them to Repentance, and a better Mind. It is the Duty of a *Servant of the Lord* (says the great Apostle) *not to Strive, but to be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth,* 2 Tim. 2. 24.

And what Age did ever more loudly proclaim the necessity of these Duties, than the present Times we live in? Or when did our Affairs abroad, and indeed the *General* Interest of our Nation more pressingly engage us to the Practice of them?

We are still contending in War with the Antient Rival of the Power and Throne of *England*, the Profess'd Enemy of the Protestant Name, our present Government, and Established Religion; and tho' the Successes our Arms have been Bless'd with, give us hopes it may end in the Honour and Safety of our Nation; yet when we consider the Sufficiency of that Prince we are engaged with, what a long time he has withstood the United Powers

Powers of *Europe* against him, and (which is the most melancholick part of the Reflection) that there are not wanting amongst us Those, whose Principles must Incline them to wish well to his Cause ; how ready should all of us be, who are in the Interest of our Constitution, to sacrifice our private Resentments to the publick Good ? and whatever Differences may arise among us as to matters of pure Opinion, to conspire in the Advancement of those things wherein all of us agree ; The Protestant Religion and the present Establishment ?

The Practise of these things have been so frequently recommended to us from the Throne, and so advantageously set off by the great Example of the United Wisdom of the Nation, that I cannot hope to add Force to the Argument from any human Topicks, and therefore I shall apply my self to the Protestants of these Nations in that Pathetick Strain wherein *St. Paul* address'd himself to the Divided Church of *Philippi*.

If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of Love, if any Fellowship of the Spirit, if any Bowels and Mercies : Fulfil ye my Joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, and one mind, Ph. 2. 1, 2.

And

And thus having demonstrated the happy Effects of Piety and Virtue upon our Political Happiness, and shewn the Practise of them to be the only certain Method of securing the Peace and Tranquility of these Nations, what remains, but that we suffer the Arguments, which I have been enforcing upon us, to be of that Weight and Consideration with us, which their Moment and Importance call for?

Let us All then be perswaded to Labour after that Universal Righteousness, which will not only befriend Us hereafter, but carries an immediate Recompence in Hand, and will most certainly derive upon us all the Blessings of Life.

We all of us seem ready to hazard our Lives, and to expose our Estates and Fortunes, and all that is dear to us, for the Service and Preservation of our Country; And why then should we not take that compendious Method God Himself has pointed out to us, of *Fearing Him, and Keeping all his Commandments always*? Why should we not endeavour to remove the great Obstructions of our National Happiness, and since we are willing to part with our *Lives* for it, to sacrifice our *Sins* at least to the publick Good and

and Safety? More especially let us make it our Business to Preserve and Keep up the Dignity and Authority of that Happy Constitution we are Bless'd with, by entertaining a Just and Honourable Opinion of our Lawful Superiors. Let us endeavour to practise those great and important Duties of Justice and Righteousness in our Dealings with one another, and pay all that Deference and Honour to those who are entrusted with the publick Administration of Justice amongst us, *Seeing that by them we enjoy great Quietness, and that very worthy Deeds are done unto this Nation by their Providence, Act. 24. 2.*

Let us, *if it be possible, and as much as in us lies, live peaceably with all Men, and mark Those that cause Divisions amongst us, and avoid them.*

But above all things let us all Unite in an Unfeigned Application to the Throne of Grace, that God would be pleas'd to grant our Gracious Sovereign a Long and Happy Reign over us, and to direct Her Counsels, and prosper Her Endeavours for Her own Honour, and the publick Good; and that when He shall Translate Her from hence to a far better Kingdom, and reward Her for the Blessings her Government shall have derived

rived on these Nations, with a Crown incorruptible, and which fadeth not away, that then He would Bless our Posterity with a Succession of the like Pious and Renowned Princes of the Protestant Line, to Protect and Govern this Protestant Church and Kingdom, that it might not only be well with Us, but with our Children for Ever, which, &c. God of his Infinite Mercy Grant to these Nations, for the Merits of his most Blessed Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, Three Persons, but one God, be Ascrib'd, as is most Due, all Praise, Might, Majesty, and Dominion; for Ever and Ever.
Amen.

F I N I S.